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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council holds formal meeting concerning human rights situation in certain parts of Iraq; hears report by Special Rapporteur of Commission on Human Rights, remains seized of the matter.

+ Secretary-General welcomes signing of peace accord between Government of Mozambique and Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) in Rome on 7 August; says he hopes agreement will help end devastating conflict in that country.

+ Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina asks for urgent meeting of Security Council, with formal debate, to consider situation in that country; Council expected to hold consultations on that topic this evening.

Convened this afternoon in a formal meeting to consider the human rights situation in certain parts of Iraq, the Security Council heard the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, Max van der Stoel, who warned that the food blockade by the Iraqi Government against its Kurdish population in the north and its Shi'ite population in the southern marshes could rapidly develop into a situation where famine could only be avoided by a major international relief operation. However, he said, the international agencies have been gradually withdrawing because of continuing harassment, travel restrictions and refusals to grant visas by the Iraqi authorities, leaving these populations with practically no protection or support. Mr. van der Stoel stressed it was imperative for the international relief organizations to be allowed to perform their humanitarian tasks.

The Special Rapporteur further warned that the recent artillery bombardment and attacks by Iraqi air craft of the southern marshes pointed to the start of a major military effort by the Government to restore its control over that region, regardless of casualties. "Iraq", said Mr. van der Stoel, "is a totalitarian regime, it uses totalitarian methods to crush any opposition or even any dissenting opinion".

Mr. van der Stoel urged that action be taken to bring a halt to the "serious violations of human rights" and of Security Council resolution 688

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(1991). He proposed that a "mechanism" be put in place to monitor the continuing situation and to measure compliance with the resolution.

In his statement, the Iraqi Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Abdul al-Amir Al-Anbari, rejected the statement by the Special Rapporteur, saying that given the gravity of allegations of violation of human rights by the Iraqi authorities, the Rapporteur should have sought clarification from the Government of that country. He denied that the Iraqi authorities mistreated their northern or southern populations, as reported by Mr. van der Stoel.

The other members of the Security Council - including the permanent members - expressed their concern over the situation of the Iraqi civilian population in certain parts of the country. The Council decided to remain seized of the matter.

The meeting had been requested by Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and the United States which, in letters to the Council President, had expressed concern at reports of "continuing repression" of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq which they said constituted "a threat to peace and international security".

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the signing of a peace accord between the Government of Mozambique and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) in Rome on 7 August. On the same day, he briefed the members of the Security Council on what he called "this important and welcome" development.

In a statement issued today by his Spokeswoman, the Secretary-General expressed hope that the agreement would help bring to an early end the long conflict that had devastated the country. He expressed his confidence that this breakthrough would facilitate the resolution of outstanding issues, including arrangements for a cease-fire, demobilization of forces and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Reiterating his support for the peace process in Mozambique, the Secretary-General said he stood ready to contribute to the achievement of a lasting, comprehensive peace in that country.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali was represented at the signing in Rome by an observer.

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The Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Muhamed Sacirbey, has asked for an urgent meeting of the Security Council, with formal debate, to consider the situation in his country and take appropriate collective measures as provided for in Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to restore peace and stability in the region. The request was contained in a letter to the Council President, dated 10 August.

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At a press conference yesterday at Headquarters, Mr. Sacirbey told correspondents that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina wanted to be able to defend themselves. An arms embargo was imposed on Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the "other side" enjoyed an unlimited supply of weapons. In Sarajevo, some 50,000 people were ready to defend their Republic, but the Government only had enough weapons to arm 5,000, the Bosnian Ambassador said. Document S/24401.

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